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Growing in Christ

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Introduction

Fundamental Beliefs

Everyone believes in something. Even those who claim to believe in nothing still believe in something. And our beliefs are important because they greatly influence how we live. But, for some Christians, more important than belief is belonging to a group, such as a community. But community must be based on shared beliefs, shared goals, and shared problems.

For Seventh-day Adventists, what holds us together as a community are our “fundamental [basic] beliefs.” These 28 fundamental beliefs are very important to growing in Christ and living as a community of faith while looking forward to eternity.

Some argue that what is important is our love of Christ, not doctrine (Bible teachings). This sounds nice. But the Bible never separates a love for Christ from a love for the truth. We are told that by “speaking the truth in love,” we may grow into Christ (Ephesians 4:15). This means that knowing doctrine is not just knowing correct data (information). Instead, knowing doctrine leads to love for God (2 John 6–10). So, the Bible teaches the importance of having “sound doctrine” because sound doctrine helps us to live an ethical¹ life (1 Timothy 1:9, 10; Titus 2:1–5).

The Seventh-day Adventist Church has a statement of 28 fundamental beliefs. These are not an established list of beliefs that cannot be changed. This is because we must always be open to more light. But the 28 fundamental beliefs are very important to the unity (oneness; agreement) and mission of the church. What else has brought together millions of people from all over the world into a united movement (a group joined as one to make change) other than our shared beliefs?

This quarter, we are going to focus on (give our attention to) some of those teachings. We believe that all 28 beliefs are very basic to our being known as Seventh-day Adventists. But we cannot study them all in one quarter. We hope this quarter’s lessons will help us to understand some of these beliefs. Special attention will be given to belief number 11, “Growing in Christ.” It was accepted by the General Conference Session in St. Louis, Missouri, in 2005 (read lessons 5–7). This belief did not add a new or unknown teaching. But it helps to make clear the church’s understanding of God’s power to give believers in Christ vic-

1. ethical—what is right or correct.

tory over the forces of evil. In fact, all the lessons this quarter will be based on the background of the struggle between Christ and Satan. It is what we call “the great controversy [war].”

In this great-controversy theme, salvation in Christ is the thread that runs through all our doctrines. The great controversy then sets the stage for the plan of salvation. This controversy theme can be found in all 28 of our fundamental beliefs.

However, doctrines are not the goal by themselves. They are a way of bringing us to Jesus. And Jesus is our goal. The doctrines also help us to know Jesus for ourselves and to grow in Him. More important, all 28 of our doctrines should lead us to a deeper understanding of the things that Jesus has done for us through the plan of salvation. In turn, this plan should lead us to a deeper love of God, and a life more dedicated to (wanting to serve) God. This plan also should lead us to show that love to the world, and to “principalities [kingdoms] and powers in the heavenly places” (Ephesians 3:10, NKJV).

Yes, everyone believes in something. The goal of this quarter is to help us to believe in Truth (John 14:6), to love Him even more, and to grow in His grace.²

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2. grace—God’s gift of forgiveness and mercy that He gives us to take away our sins.